

Lauren Hocevar

PSL Final Speech

I want to be a doctor, which was the original reason I chose to volunteer at TriPoint Medical Center. Since volunteering at TriPoint, however, I have realized that there were many more underlying reasons why I kept going back. As my time volunteering there has been winding down, I've realized that they actually taught me more than I could ever hope to teach them. This is the reason I chose to sum up my experience with the quote "A mind stretched to a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions."

I have to admit that despite my effervescent personality, it takes real effort to make me comfortable in a new place. At first, I felt very uncomfortable buzzing myself into an operating room, but the staff made every effort they could to change that. I remember my first day. That awkward feeling when you first walk in and you know absolutely no one hit hard. I felt like a shadow wandering around this room. When I was done doing the mundane tasks that had been assigned, I sat down next to a little old lady who I had no idea was going to become one of the greatest people I ever met, and also one of the only reasons I almost never skip volunteering. Susi was my supervisor, and also my teacher. She talked to me about a different topic almost every time I volunteered; why wouldn't I want to go back? I remember she looked at me with these big, bright blue eyes and said "you're not going to leave us early, are you?" My first thought was not an optimistic one. From her statement, I was either gathering that she thought I was going to flake out, or that she had hopes of getting a new volunteer come January. I came to find out I was wrong. Every day Susi tells me how grateful she is that I stayed the whole year in her recovery room, and how happy she is that she can count on me to help her out. Susi has changed my life because she has taught me gratitude. Even when she is in a bad mood-which is rare occasion-or even stressed about too many patients, she makes an effort to tell me thank you every day. This gratitude and kindness isn't just directed toward me though. I remember one day when we had a patient wake up and become very violent. Susi tried her best to calm the patient down and keep her cool even though the patient was cussing at her and trying to hit her. This kindness is also shared with Carla, who can often be associated with the wicked witch of the west. Although Susi is much more religious than I am, I admire her strong morals. It has taught me that when you believe in something, you should stand up for it. If you have nothing to stand for than you have nothing at all. I have seen Susi put smiles on so many people's faces, including my own, and it makes me want to be like her. She has changed the way I view a lot of things. I find myself looking on the bright side more often. Now, I can barely escape out the door before Susi asks me if I found a replacement for myself next year. I hope that the next person's service can make her as happy as mine did; she deserves to have a smile as big as the ones she makes. However it is not just Susi that I look forward to see every Tuesday and Thursday, it is the doctors as well.

Whether it is Dr.Pritchard's frequent questions about my calculus, Dr. Ferron's teasing about my out of date phone, or Dr. Siminovich's sarcastic humor, I know that I am always in for a treat when I walk in the hospital. Prior to volunteering there, I had certain stereotypical views about the people I was about to spend the rest of my life with. "Doctors are cold, they have no life, and they're only in it for the

money." Well, although the money is a plus, I learned that often times not the case, which is where my second lesson comes in. I met Dr. Pritchard in the call room. This room is small, surrounded by windows with a gorgeous view of the outside landscape. This room is where most doctors sit when they are on call, to try to relax a bit. I had been sitting there waiting for another task trying to study for my calculus exam when he approached me. "Oh so I see you're in calculus. I took that in High School. It made me want to jump out a window." That comment triggered a long conversation about life, and also a new friendship. We talked about his decision to be a doctor, his college career, his family, his kids, his now ex-wife. I was surprised at how much he was willing to open up to a complete stranger. When Susi came back for me and I was forced to leave the conversation, I figured that was a once in a lifetime thing and that I would probably never talk to him again. I was again, wrong. Every time he sees me in the recovery room he asks me how I am, how my grades are, and talk about his day. Dr. Pritchard changed my life; from him, I learned two things. First, I learned that not every way I perceived things and people to be was correct. Second, I learned that life is about overcoming things. I have not had a hard life, and I am thankful for that, but in moments when I feel like giving up now I think about all that others have overcome, and continue on. I often find myself being anxious and nervous about going to college for such a long time, and I remember the time I spent at the TriPoint copy machine. After at least twenty minutes of messing with it I finally got it print double-sided. I sat down in relief and Dr. Siminovich said to me, "You're persistent. If you can figure out that copy machine you can make it through med school." He, along with all the others I have encountered, gave me hope, which during my senior year of high school, is all I really needed.

My life has been changed for the better. For these reasons, I think that the people I served have made more of an impact on me than I have on them. I know my service work will continue to impact the hospital and change the lives of the people there because I have encouraged others to go and replace me when the time comes. They will impact lives and be impacted in the same way I have. My mind has been stretched; due to all the people that have encouraged me and taught me the things I needed to know, and it will never go back to its old dimensions.